United Nations A/60/759

General Assembly

Distr.: General
20 April 2006

Original: English and French

Sixtieth session
Agenda item 112 (e)
Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of 47 members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 4 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations presents its compliments to the President of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly and has the honour to inform him that Canada has decided to present its candidature to the Human Rights Council at elections to be held during the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, on 9 May 2006.

Canada has a longstanding commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, which it has demonstrated through its active involvement in and support for United Nations human rights bodies, including the Commission on Human Rights, its bilateral relations, its development assistance programmes designed to strengthen capacity in human rights, and its ratification and implementation of international human rights treaties.

In accordance with resolution 60/251, the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations will shortly submit to all Permanent Missions a more detailed document outlining Canada's continuing commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights, including how it intends to contribute to the work of the Human Rights Council.

The Government of Canada attaches great importance to the mandate and objectives of the new Human Rights Council and looks forward to contributing in a constructive manner to their fulfilment.

06-32044 (E) 020506

Annex to the note verbale dated 4 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations presents its compliments to the President of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly and, following its note dated 4 April 2006, announcing Canada's candidacy to the Human Rights Council, and in accordance with resolution 60/251, has the honour to enclose herewith a document detailing Canada's contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights and its voluntary pledges and commitments made thereto (see enclosure).

The Government of Canada is committed to making a positive contribution to ensuring that the Human Rights Council becomes an effective body for the promotion and protection of human rights.

Enclosure

Human Rights Council

Canada's commitments and pledges

The promotion and protection of human rights is an integral part of Canada's foreign and domestic policy. Canada is a strong supporter of the United Nations human rights system.

Canada's engagement with the Human Rights Council

The Human Rights Council will be at the heart of the United Nations human rights architecture and thus, Canada pledges:

- To work with all stakeholders to put in place an efficient and effective Human Rights Council that builds on the strengths and lessons learned of the Commission on Human Rights
- To give effect to the Council's mandate to promote and protect human rights, including by responding appropriately to human rights violations, by contributing to its work on norm development, and by encouraging cooperation and dialogue
- To engage with all United Nations Member States to find new and creative ways to ensure that the Council's work has a direct, concrete and positive impact on the promotion and protection of the rights of people around the world
- To participate constructively in the mandate review process and in developing modalities of a universal periodic review mechanism, and to submit itself to periodic review
- To ensure that the Council benefits from the involvement and contributions of civil society, including non-governmental organizations and national institutions
- To work with all stakeholders for a system of special procedures, which is essential for the Council's emphasis on the implementation of human rights obligations
- To re-extend its open invitation to special procedures to visit Canada.

In 1999, Canada was one of the first countries to give an open invitation to special procedures of the Commission on Human Rights. Since that time, the Special Rapporteurs on toxic waste, the rights of migrants, indigenous peoples, racism, the right to health and, most recently in 2005, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention have made official visits.

Canada was re-elected to the Commission on Human Rights for the 2005-2007 term. During its tenures, Canada played a leadership role in the establishment and implementation of norms and standards on key human rights issues including the rights of indigenous peoples, violence against women, freedom of expression, mass exoduses, the work of treaty bodies, as well as rights of the child.

Canada has also taken a leadership role in the fight against impunity, including by becoming a party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and strongly supporting various international and hybrid criminal tribunals. Its commitment to international humanitarian law and the protection of refugees is unwavering.

Support for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and international cooperation

Canada's strong support to the important work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was reaffirmed recently when we increased our unearmarked funding for the Office, making Canada one of the top donors. We have also supported efforts to double the funds available to the Office from the United Nations regular budget. Canada pledges:

- To provide the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights with additional unearmarked contributions for its work

- To pursue international cooperation programmes on human rights, gender equality, child protection, democracy, good governance, and the rule of law — this, in response to the interest expressed by many States for dialogue and cooperation.

Canada and United Nations human rights instruments

Canada has ratified key United Nations human rights instruments: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; and Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on children in armed conflict. As well, Canada recently ratified the Second Optional Protocol of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aimed at the abolition of the death penalty and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sexual exploitation and sale of children. Canada has agreed to the jurisdiction of the individual complaint mechanisms established by the First Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention against Torture and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Canada is one of only six States that is fully up to date in its reporting to the treaty bodies and, by May 2006, Canada will have presented its reports before all six of these Committees in the past four years. Consultation mechanisms are in place to ensure that federal, provincial and territorial governments are aware of, and give serious consideration to, the recommendations of treaty bodies, and further, that such recommendations are available to Canadians.

As regards United Nations human rights instruments, Canada pledges:

- To submit its reports to the treaty bodies in a timely fashion and to participate in meaningful dialogue with the treaty body members

- To work with the treaty bodies and key stakeholders on the renewal and reform of the United Nations treaty body system

- To consider signing or ratifying other human rights instruments, such as the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture.

Human rights in Canada

At the domestic level, human rights and gender equality are promoted and protected through the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. At the federal, provincial and territorial levels, there are also human rights codes and human rights bodies, such as the Canadian Human Rights Commission, which play a key role in furthering equality rights in Canada.

Canada has a vigorous civil society, which plays an important role in the promotion of human rights, both at the national and international level. The government and civil society engage on a range of issues relating to human rights, in a spirit of cooperation and dialogue.

All governments in Canada carry out public education programmes in the area of human rights, including through formal education curricula.

On the basis of this solid institutional and legislative background, Canada commits itself to actively pursue the implementation of human rights domestically, including with respect to racism, indigenous people and the protection of children.